

Limited English Proficiency Pathway

December 2006

- *In a May 2006 report, the Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA) in DSHS found that 10.9% of the adults on TANF were LEP.*
- *Between May and July 2006, an average of 3,326 TANF parents participated in the LEP pathway program per month.*
- *Approximately 450 Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) recipients participate in the LEP pathway each month.*
- *RDA also found that, compared to non-LEP adults on TANF, LEP TANF adults:*
 - *Have higher annual earnings*
 - *Work more hours*
 - *Earn average wages of \$1 less per hour*
- *LEP TANF adults are more likely than non-LEP TANF adults to:*
 - *Be married (61% compared to 21%)*
 - *Have more children (2.8 compared to 1.8)*
 - *Be formally educated (61% with high school or more compared to 32%)*

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For more information about the WorkFirst program, visit
www.workfirst.wa.gov

What is the LEP Pathways Program?

The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Pathway program provides specialized services to refugees and immigrants with limited English skills to increase their employability and place them into jobs that lead to self-sufficiency. LEP parents who receive assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program meet their WorkFirst requirements through the LEP Pathways program. All services are provided in a client's primary language and in culturally appropriate ways.

In addition, the LEP Pathway program provides employment services to limited English proficient refugees who receive Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).

Employable parents must participate in the program or face sanction.

Do all employable LEP Parents on TANF receive services through LEP Pathways?

No. Only LEP parents whose English skills have been assessed as ESL level 1 (minimal to no functional English proficiency) through ESL level 4 (low, intermediate English proficiency) receive services through Pathways.

LEP parents who have been assessed as ESL level 5 (high intermediate proficiency) or above, are considered to have an English skill level that allows them to receive employment services through the mainstream WorkFirst program. However, exceptions to this rule are allowed on a case by case basis.

How are services provided?

The Refugee & Immigrant Assistance unit (RIA) in the Economic Services Administration of DSHS administers 35 contracts statewide for LEP services. Employment services are provided through contracts with community-based organizations, the Employment Security Department, and Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGS). Most employment providers have close ties to ethnic communities and many employ staff who are immigrants or former refugees.

Of the 35 contracts for LEP services, 16 are for ESL training. Thirteen of the 16 contracts for ESL services are with local community colleges. The remaining 3 contracts are with local Community Based Organizations.

After a family has been determined eligible for TANF, the WorkFirst Program Specialist conducts the foundation portion of the Comprehensive Evaluation on the parent. If the parent is determined to be LEP and employable, the case manager refers them to a Pathways service provider.